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Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

Summary

The present report is divided into two parts. Part one gives an overview of critical themes relating to children and armed conflict and highlights significant developments over the reporting period. It emphasizes the role of field visits of the Special Representative as a key element of her advocacy strategy and outlines the main findings of missions to the Sudan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Middle East, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. The report also lists commitments made by parties to conflict during the course of those field visits, stressing the need for timely and systematic follow-up to ensure their practical implementation. Part one concludes that Member States should apply concrete and targeted measures against recalcitrant violators, particularly where they have refused to enter into dialogue or where such dialogue has failed to yield tangible protection for children.

Part two of the report presents the findings of a strategic review of the study by Graça Machel entitled "Impact of armed conflict on children" (see A/51/306 and Add.1), which marked the 10-year anniversary of that groundbreaking report. In view of the scope of that report, the strategic review was co-convened with the United Nations Children's Fund, with which a special strategic review secretariat was established.[a] The strategic review report was prepared with an inter-agency advisory group and featured a multi-stakeholder process involving United Nations system partners, Member States, non-governmental organizations and other representatives of civil society, as well as children themselves. The Special Representative presents part two of the report on behalf of the co-convenors as well as the multi-stakeholder partnership.

[a] It should be noted that work continues on a comprehensive report on the findings of the strategic review process, to be published in 2008.

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Part one

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/77, in which the Assembly established the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and requested the submission of an annual report on the situation of children affected by armed conflict. The Assembly has since extended the mandate of the Special Representative three times, most recently by its resolution 60/231. This is the tenth report submitted to the Assembly on children and armed conflict.

2. Part one of the present report focuses on some of the major themes and developments relating to children and armed conflict during the reporting period. A number of significant developments are highlighted in the fight to end impunity through the application of international standards for the protection of children, as well as tangible results of political-level child protection dialogue. Part one outlines progress on mainstreaming the subject of children and armed conflict in the work of the United Nations, particularly in the peace and security sector and United Nations peacekeeping. It also focuses on the field visits of the Special Representative and resultant commitments made by parties to conflict to address child rights violations.

II. Critical themes and issues of concern

3. The Office of the Special Representative has advocated concertedly ending impunity particularly for six categories of crimes against children in situations of armed conflict: the killing and maiming of children; their recruitment and use as child soldiers; rape and other grave sexual violence; abduction of children; attacks against schools or hospitals; and denial of humanitarian access to assist children. Addressing these violations has represented a specific focus of my advocacy and dialogue with parties to conflict, and the primary themes around which I have organized my visits to situations of concern.

4. However, beyond those grave violations, it is also important to stress other emerging themes of concern relating to children on which the international community should focus attention in terms of collective advocacy and programmatic interventions. I am deeply concerned, for instance, about the security of camps for internally displaced persons and refugees. It is clear that such locations have become choice targets of parties to conflict and prime areas for recruiting children. Lack of security in and around camps has led to increased vulnerability of children to other grave violations, such as sexual violence and abduction. I have witnessed the dire plight and desperate circumstances of the thousands of children and women who make up the vast majority of camp residents in places such as Darfur, eastern Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We must address more systematically the acute vulnerability of this category.

5. Sexual and gender-based violence and the vulnerability of girls in the context of armed conflicts has been a particular preoccupation and focus of my advocacy, especially during my field missions. Even though girls are gradually receiving more attention, including in the context of post-conflict rehabilitation and reintegration programming, the child protection community, academia and other stakeholders

must strive to deepen the knowledge base on girls to inform more effective advocacy and programme interventions.

6. We are also faced with significant challenges in terms of responding to issues such as cross-border recruitment of children and their recycling in regional conflicts. Evidence suggests that significant numbers of children and young people are being compelled to join armed groups and take up lives as fighters because this may provide them and their families with a measure of protection in highly volatile and insecure settings, or in environments where war may also represent the most viable livelihood opportunity. Often in such situations, there are few alternatives for making a living, especially where prolonged conflict has undermined or destroyed the social and economic base. These factors lead to the perpetuation of cycles of violence and instability. Better documentation of cases, as well as information-sharing and coordination across borders among United Nations country programmes and peacekeeping operations, and initiatives by regional organizations in this regard, are critical to address a range of cross-border issues that affect children.

7. I am also increasingly concerned about "borderline" situations such as that in Haiti, where armed violence and conflict have created an environment in which grave violations are being committed against children by criminal gangs, many of which also appear to have strong links to political parties. In Haiti, such armed groups control territory, particularly in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and other cities, such as Gonaives, and they are systematically recruiting children as fighters, spies, informants and gun and drug carriers. Other grave violations are also being committed against children with impunity, such as killing and maiming, rape and sexual violence, and abduction and kidnapping.

8. Beyond the grave violations committed against children in the midst of conflict, the international community must also recognize that the effective rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict requires multi-year donor commitments and strategies placing an emphasis on supporting national actors so that they will assume their responsibilities in this regard.

9. Also critical is the systematic inclusion of children's concerns in peacemaking processes and post-conflict peacebuilding phases. Unless children's issues are explicitly part of the discourse at those critical stages, it is likely that they will fall through the cracks as accords are implemented and resources are allocated to consolidate peace. Specifically as regards peacemaking, it is critical that conflict mediators and other parties to negotiations have ready access to information on critical child protection provisions, and that they be inherently committed to applying them. Often, children's concerns are seen as issues of lesser priority in the broader scheme of political negotiations. A shift in our conflict mediation "culture" is required, so as to perceive issues relating to children as an entry point to the broader political dialogue rather than a liability. There is an increasing body of experience in this regard, which merits more systematic lessons-learned analysis and application of good practices.

10. The issue of security sector reform is an important emerging area of engagement that carries significant implications for children. There are considerable security challenges in post-conflict situations, including the reconstitution or reform of the military and police.

11. We are also increasingly encountering cases of illegal detention of children for alleged association with armed groups. Systematic advocacy and interventions are required for the release of children, and, where appropriate, the development of short- or medium-term remedial measures for the protection of children in situations where systems for the administration of justice are weak or non-existent.

III. Significant developments for ending impunity and delivering protection

Application of international child protection standards

12. As I noted in my last report to the General Assembly (A/61/275 and Corr.1), important precedents are being set in the fight to end impunity for crimes against children, with steady momentum building for the application of international child protection standards.

13. The most prominent developments include the confirmation by the International Criminal Court of the charges against Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, founder and leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for the conscription and enlistment of children under the age of 15 and the use of children for active participation in hostilities. The Office of the Special Representative is preparing to file an amicus curiae brief in support of this case. The International Criminal Court has also issued arrest warrants for five senior members of the Lord's Resistance Army, including its leader, Joseph Kony, who is charged with 33 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the forcible enlistment and use of children under 15 in hostilities.

14. Another tribunal, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, convicted and sentenced Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and, recently, Allieu Kondewa of the Civil Defence Forces militia for, among other crimes, the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The Special Court is currently trying, in The Hague, the case against Liberia's Charles Ghankay Taylor for 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including conscripting or enlisting children into armed forces or groups and using them to participate actively in hostilities. This action against a former President sends a clear message that no individual is beyond the reach of justice for crimes against children.

Tangible results of political-level child protection dialogue

15. The examples above of application of international norms, combined with the political process spearheaded by Member States, particularly in the context of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), on children and armed conflict, have significantly strengthened the hand of child protection advocates by opening up space for more meaningful protection dialogue with parties to conflict. Such dialogue has begun to yield concrete results in terms of commitments by parties to conflict, which are being translated into tangible protection for children on the ground.

16. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, approximately 1,200 children have already been released to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its child protection partners on the strength of the action plan agreed in November 2005 by the Forces armées des forces nouvelles with the United Nations to end the association of children with their fighting forces. The momentum of that initial dialogue also led to similar action-plan commitments in September 2006 by the four major pro-Government militia groups in western Côte d'Ivoire, which has now resulted in the identification of children in their forces and a process of releasing some 204 children, 84 of whom are girls.

17. Following a number of my field visits, action-plan commitments have also been made by parties to conflict. For instance, in June 2007 the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), one of the signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement, agreed with UNICEF the modalities for the identification and release of children associated with its forces and ongoing verification to prevent child recruitment. The anticipated time frame for the implementation of that plan is three months, with the expectation that this initial breakthrough may lead to similar commitments by other parties to the conflict in Darfur.

18. Also, as noted in my last report, following my visit to Uganda in June 2006, the Government committed to strengthening the implementation of the existing legal and policy frameworks on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and agreed to an action plan in that regard.

19. In Chad, dialogue between UNICEF and the Government of Chad led to the signature in April 2007 of a protocol of agreement on protecting children who are victims of armed conflict and their sustainable reintegration into communities and families. Under that agreement, the Government of Chad and UNICEF commit to working together and with partners in ensuring protection and services for children associated with armed forces.

20. In the Central African Republic, the Government, the Assembly of the Union of Democratic Forces rebel group and UNICEF signed an agreement in June 2007 for the release and reintegration of some 400 children associated with armed groups.

21. Another significant political-level initiative is the strong commitment expressed by 58 Member States, including a number of conflict-affected countries, to the Paris Commitments and the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated With Armed Forces or Armed Groups, which provide guidelines on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all categories of children associated with armed groups.

IV. Progress in mainstreaming the subject of children and armed conflict in the work of the United Nations

22. Among the most significant advances made in the past decade in mainstreaming this subject is the integration of child protection in United Nations peacekeeping and the emerging complementary relationship between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNICEF and other operational child protection actors. Embedded child protection expertise has enabled peacekeeping leadership to increasingly ensure that children's considerations are adequately reflected in peace processes. The heads of peacekeeping operations have also been

requested to ensure more systematic dialogue with parties to conflict to address grave violations of children's rights. United Nations peacekeeping plays a central role in monitoring and reporting violations, and peacekeepers are receiving more systematic training on child protection.

23. Central to the child protection orientation of peacekeeping has been the deployment of child protection advisers. In May 2007, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Peacekeeping Best Practices Section published a long-awaited lessons-learned study on child protection, entitled "The impact of child protection advisers in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations". The following main lessons emerged from the study:

(a) The concept of child protection advisers and their current terms of reference should be jointly reviewed and clarified by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF;

(b) There is a need for specialized capacity at Department of Peacekeeping Operations headquarters to provide guidance, training and daily operational support to the child protection advisers in the field;

(c) Best practices need to be captured from child protection advisers and fed into policy and guidance development by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in consultation with UNICEF, the Office of the Special Representative and other partners, as appropriate;

(d) The location of child protection units or advisers within the mission structure needs to be reviewed and possibly standardized;

(e) The profile and selection process for child protection advisers should be reviewed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in consultation with the Office of the Special Representative and UNICEF.

24. As an element of practical follow-up to that study, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is in the process of recruiting at the headquarters level the necessary child protection expertise to interface with child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations and with UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative.

V. Visits of the Special Representative to situations of concern

Context and objectives of the missions

25. Since assuming my role as Special Representative in February 2006, I have committed myself to undertaking field visits as a central element of my advocacy strategy to bring high-level attention to the plight and circumstances of children affected by armed conflict.

26. It is important to stress that such visits are carried out to support the advocacy and programmatic work of operational partners on the ground, to raise the level of global awareness about their work, to help open further space for their protection dialogue and, where appropriate, to assist operational partners in unblocking political impasses to further advance protection agendas. Thus, all my missions are

timed, planned, prepared and coordinated in close consultation with the heads of missions or country teams, operational partners, particularly UNICEF and other relevant country team members, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is also important to stress that my visits are carried out on the invitation of and in close consultation with, at every phase, the Governments concerned, in a spirit of international cooperation, with the understanding that the role of the United Nations is to support and complement the lead role of Member States.

27. It is also important to point out that I have engaged in dialogue for the explicit purpose of child protection with all parties, both State and non-State, whose actions have a significant impact on children. However, such dialogue, particularly with non-State actors, does not imply political recognition of or confer legitimacy upon such parties.

28. In 2007, I have visited the following areas where there are situations of concern: the Sudan (January 2007), the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi (March 2007), Lebanon and Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories (April 2007) and Myanmar (June 2007). I also engaged a Special Adviser, supported by my Office, to visit Sri Lanka (November 2006). The broad objectives of those visits were:

(a) To make a first-hand assessment of the situation of children so as to enhance global advocacy for protection and programme interventions on their behalf, and to meet and speak with the children themselves to get a direct sense of their experience and their needs;

(b) To support and facilitate the dialogue of United Nations actors with parties to conflict towards action plans to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers and release all children associated with fighting forces, and to advocate for concrete measures and elicit commitments by parties to prevent other grave violations;

(c) To assess, where applicable, the implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), on children and armed conflict, including implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on the six types of grave violations against children;

(d) To engage in dialogue with relevant national authorities at the highest levels to gain concrete commitments to prevent and address violations, and to ascertain and highlight specific child protection measures that may have been taken by Governments;

(e) To engage with NGOs and local civil society groups on protection concerns for children affected by armed conflict, and to better support their work.

Critical themes stressed during the visits

29. Although a wide range of issues and themes have been covered during the course of my visits, I have made an effort to focus attention on four primary concerns: the recruitment and use of children as soldiers; grave sexual violence against children; the safety and access of humanitarian personnel; and rehabilitation and reintegration of children.

30. Over the past several years, the international community has focused concerted attention on the scourge of child soldiering, and I have prioritized this issue to ensure that the strong momentum that now exists is maintained and begins to yield more concrete results in terms of the application of international standards to put an end to this practice. I have also given special priority to girls in conflict because their plight, circumstances and experiences are often the most desperate, and at the same time they are often the most marginalized and stigmatized because of the abuses that have been perpetrated against them. The targeting of humanitarian personnel has become increasingly prevalent, and this is an absolutely unacceptable practice. All parties to conflict must ensure the inviolability of those who provide humanitarian services, and ensure that humanitarian staff have access to children. The issue of rehabilitation and reintegration is critical so as to ensure that cycles of violence and conflict are not perpetuated. It is critical to secure the long-term sustainability of interventions, and to support and invest in the capacity of national authorities to assume their lead responsibility in this regard.

Sri Lanka

31. In November 2006, I appointed former Ambassador Allan Rock as my Special Adviser to visit Sri Lanka to ascertain the situation on the ground, with a particular focus on the action plan for children and armed conflict agreed between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) following peace talks in 2002 and 2003. Under that plan LTTE committed to working with UNICEF to end the recruitment of children and facilitate the release of underage recruits in its ranks. With the full cooperation of the Government, my Special Adviser had access to all areas of the country and was able to gain extensive knowledge of the situation of conflict-affected children, primarily in the north and the east. The mission's initial findings revealed that LTTE has not complied with its commitments: underage recruitment continues and several hundred children have not yet been released, as verified by UNICEF. It was also ascertained that the breakaway Karuna faction of LTTE abducts children in Government-controlled areas of the east, and there is credible evidence that certain elements of the Sri Lankan army may have aided in this practice.

32. Following the visit of my Special Adviser to Sri Lanka, the following commitments were made:

(a) LTTE gave assurances that it would work with UNICEF to accelerate the release from its ranks of all children under the age of 17, with the objective of completing this process by the beginning of 2007. (Unfortunately, LTTE did not commit to the full release of children under the age of 18, in contravention of applicable national and international law.) It also committed to better training for its military commanders in relation to recruitment, and instituting a process to discipline those who do not comply;

(b) The Karuna faction undertook to publish formal policy statements forbidding underage recruitment and to release children who may be in its ranks. It also agreed to work with UNICEF in an effort to trace the whereabouts and arrange the release of those abducted children whose families have notified UNICEF;

(c) The Government of Sri Lanka committed to undertake an independent and credible investigation into the allegations that elements of the Sri Lankan army have aided the abduction and recruitment of children by the Karuna faction.

Sudan

33. In my mission to the Sudan in January 2007, I visited Juba in the south, as well as Darfur, noting that the conflict has affected most of the population. I concluded that there prevails a culture of impunity for violations against children. In Darfur, the situation is aggravated by an acute security vacuum, in the context of which armed groups terrorize and brutalize both the civilian population and humanitarian workers with full impunity. In Juba, the central issue was no longer the continuing recruitment of children, but the difficulties encountered in their reintegration into society and challenges related to the most basic infrastructure for the well-being of children.

34. I welcomed the initiatives of the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan for the protection of children, including the process of reforming critical national legislation. Positive developments were also noted in dealing with sexual and gender-based violence, including through the establishment by the Khartoum State police in April 2006 of a unit specialized in issues related to children and women, undergoing training in Jordan. However, in our discussions I made it clear that much more had to be done to fight impunity and to protect women and children.

35. The following commitments were made by the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan:

(a) To allow UNICEF and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan to visit and audit the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army, as well as the military barracks of allied armed forces and groups, and to allow the United Nations, together with an appropriate Government focal point such as the National Commission for Child Welfare, to monitor and verify compliance;

(b) To allocate adequate resources for the reintegration of children associated with armed forces in their communities;

(c) To adopt and implement in a timely manner national legislation to criminalize the recruitment of child soldiers;

(d) To establish, jointly with the United Nations, a task force on sexual violence and abuse against children;

(e) To ensure the safety and protection of humanitarian personnel, including follow-up and action on recent cases of attacks against United Nations staff in Nyala and on the persistent incidents of armed robbery and other targeting of humanitarian personnel.

36. In addition, key signatories and non-signatories of the Darfur Peace Agreement committed to cooperate fully with the United Nations in the preparation of action plans to identify and release children associated with their forces and to institute a system of monitoring and verification.

37. In July 2007, the Security Council adopted resolution 1769 (2007), on the establishment of an African Union/United Nations hybrid peacekeeping mission in Darfur. The resolution is exemplary in that it requests that the protection of children be addressed in the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement and asks for continued monitoring of and reporting on grave violations against children and protection dialogue with parties to conflict for the elaboration of action plans. With

the anticipated deployment of 26,000 peacekeepers, this reflects the international community's concerns regarding lack of security for children and other vulnerable groups.

Burundi

38. The purpose of my visit to Burundi in March 2007 was primarily to follow up the recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict regarding the situation of children and armed conflict in the country. I was encouraged by the progress made to ensure greater protection for children and efforts to ensure the timely reintegration of children associated with armed groups. However, I remain deeply concerned about the continuing lack of full compliance on the part of the Forces nationales de libération.

39. The authorities made the following commitments:

(a) President Nkurunziza and senior ministers expressed their deep commitment to continue the Government's efforts to address child rights and protection in the peace consolidation phase;

(b) They recognized that all children associated with armed groups, whether in detention or in the ranks, must be released and reintegrated into their communities;

(c) They stated that no efforts would be spared to continue the fight against impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence, and in particular for such violations against minors;

(d) Regarding minors in detention, the authorities committed in the short term to ensure that children would be separated from adults during their detention.

40. Since my visit to Burundi I have also met with the Peacebuilding Commission to urge attention to the needs of conflict-affected children, in particular the need for longer-term reintegration strategies.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

41. I visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo in March 2007, meeting with the Prime Minister, senior ministers and many of the commanders in the eastern provinces. I urged the authorities to take timely and decisive action against violators of children's rights, and I called for the arrest of commander Biyoyo, who had previously been tried and convicted for recruitment of children and is currently at large. Despite strong commitments by the newly elected Government, I remain deeply concerned about the situation of children, especially in the eastern provinces.

42. It is critical to undertake all necessary measures to demobilize children who are still in the ranks of the non-integrated armed groups and in the Congolese Armed Forces. Proper reintegration of released children in their communities is crucial to avoid re-recruitment and to ensure stability in the peace process. Long-term development strategies are required, as well as appropriate allocations of funds to support the efforts of UNICEF and child protection partners. I was also deeply concerned by the extent of sexual violence in the eastern part of the country and the climate of impunity that prevails for such crimes. I visited Panzi hospital and spoke with many girls who had been subjected to multiple rapes and humiliation and was

able to learn of the efforts by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and partners to deal with this terrible problem.

43. The Congolese authorities made the following commitments:

(a) To take measures, in consultation with the United Nations, to tackle the issues of child recruitment and sexual violence;

(b) To take all necessary measures to rearrest commander Biyoyo;

(c) To take effective action to fight impunity of armed groups, such as those led by Laurent Nkunda and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda;

(d) To take steps, in consultation with the United Nations, to fight impunity.

Lebanon

44. The situation in the Middle East has been a continuing concern to child protection actors, especially after the war between Lebanon and Israel in 2006. In Lebanon I met with the Prime Minister and other senior government officials. I also met with many children, particularly in the south, including the hard-hit town of Bint Jbeil, and in the Shatila Palestinian refugee camp in south Beirut. I was impressed by their resilience, but the hidden psychological effects and the long-term consequences should not be underestimated. Lebanese children have also suffered directly from the surrounding violence: they account for one third of all civilians killed, a third of the injured and half of the over 1 million people forced to flee their homes. Forty schools in affected areas were totally destroyed, and school dropout rates increased dramatically because of insecurity. In addition, children are particularly exposed to the hundreds of thousands of unexploded cluster munitions fired by the Israel Defense Forces in the last three days of the conflict. Relatively little is known about the use of children as soldiers in Lebanon. There are no reports of underage recruitment in the regular armed forces and only anecdotal evidence of their presence in the armed faction of Hizbullah. However, there are significant concerns that the dire situation of Lebanese youth, the ongoing political violence and the desperate social and economic conditions may prompt children to become involved in armed conflict.

45. During my interactions with the Government, the authorities expressed their willingness:

(a) To prioritize the protection of children and, with help from the international community, to provide adequate education and psychosocial support to children;

(b) To move forward with the ratification of the relevant Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child once the parliamentary process is in motion. Hizbullah gave its commitment to support this initiative.

Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories

46. In Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, I also chose to spend most of my time interacting with the children. As in Lebanon, I noted that they were playful and resilient, but I was disturbed by their expressions of fear, anxiety, anger, revenge and hopelessness. I met with the Foreign Minister and other high-level Israeli officials, and while recognizing their legitimate security concerns, I

expressed my deep reservations about the barrier erected to separate the West Bank from Israel and pointed out its humanitarian consequences for children's health, education and right to freedom of movement. I also called for the release of customs and tax revenues due to the Palestinian Authority for health and education expenditures. I raised the issue of detained Palestinian children and urged that a different approach be taken to children found responsible for minor offences. I noted that there were approximately 400 children in detention, and my conversations with some of them indicated that they were extremely hard and bitter after the experience, thus feeding the cycle of violence. While meeting with the Palestinian authorities, I expressed my concerns about the use of children for political and armed violence and about the need to engage with UNICEF to devise a plan of action to prevent the use of children in such violence.

47. During my visit, the following commitments were made:

(a) President Abbas and Foreign Minister Abu Amr committed to reviving among Palestinian groups the code of conduct by which children are not to be involved in political violence;

(b) They expressed their willingness to devise a plan of action with UNICEF to prevent the use of children in such violence;

(c) Both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government indicated that they were ready to review school curricula to prevent incitement to violence and hatred, and to explore ways of reviving the tripartite commission to ensure cooperation in this field, including the integration of peace education.

Myanmar

48. The aim of my visit to Myanmar in June 2007 was to establish the Myanmar United Nations task force on children and armed conflict and to discuss the modalities of monitoring and reporting on grave violations of children's rights with high-level officials, including the Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council, Lieutenant General Thein Sein, as well as the United Nations country team and child protection partners. I was able to hold a substantive discussion with the Government of Myanmar Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Underage Children. I was also able to meet with one of the non-State actors listed in the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/61/529-S/2006/876 and Corr.1), the United Wa State Army.

49. The following commitments were made:

(a) To facilitate the monitoring and reporting modalities, the authorities assigned the Director-General of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement to act as the government focal point on matters relating to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005);

(b) The Wa representative expressed confidence that the United Wa State Army would be amenable to discussing modalities of an action plan with UNICEF, and that it would welcome further development assistance, especially regarding education;

(c) Regarding the inclusion of other non-State parties to the conflict in the process relating to resolution 1612 (2005), it was agreed with the Myanmar authorities that further discussions would be undertaken to finalize arrangements for

the country team to engage the Karen National Union and the Karenni National Progressive Party on action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children.

Follow-up to the field visits

50. The critical challenge is to ensure timely follow-up to commitments made, especially for their practical implementation. The main responsibility for this lies with the United Nations country teams, with additional political-level support from the Special Representative as necessary. It is important not to lose momentum and to agree to clear and time-bound action plans and benchmarks to address violations. Additional resources for monitoring and reporting and the necessary programme response for reintegration efforts should not be underemphasized.

VI. Concluding recommendations

51. **It has been more than 10 years since the publication of the Graça Machel study on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306 and Add.1). A strategic review of that groundbreaking report has been carried out in a multi-stakeholder process co-convened by the Office of the Special Representative and UNICEF, involving United Nations system partners, Member States, NGOs and other representatives of civil society, as well as children themselves. I urge Member States to give the recommendations set out in part two of the present report due attention and consideration.**

Part two

I. The Machel study and the 10-year strategic review

"Children are both our reason to struggle to eliminate the worst aspects of warfare, and our best hope for succeeding at it."

— Graça Machel[1]

1. The landmark 1996 United Nations report "Impact of armed conflict on children" (A/51/306 and Add.1) proposed comprehensive actions to improve the protection and care of children affected by armed conflict. Known as the Machel study because of its author, the expert of the Secretary-General, Graça Machel, the report remains widely used as a foundation for programme and advocacy. The General Assembly unanimously welcomed the report in its resolution 51/77, in which it also established the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

2. The present report results from a tenth-anniversary strategic review of the Machel study co-convened with UNICEF. This is the first review presented to the General Assembly since 1996; it addresses the full range of issues for children affected by armed conflict, beyond the specific mandate of the Special Representative.[2]

3. The strategic review featured a consultation process involving Member States, United Nations entities,[3] civil society organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and independent experts. Sectoral, thematic and regional submissions were contributed or commissioned and expert meetings convened. A special consultation process reached more than 1,000 children and youths through focus groups in 18 war-affected countries, and an online survey reached more than 300 in another 91 countries.

4. As stated in the Machel study, "war violates every right of a child — the right to life, the right to be with family and community, the right to health, the right to the development of the personality and the right to be nurtured and protected".[4] While the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups has dominated attention in the last decade, all impacts of armed conflict on children must be redressed.

5. Many conflicts last longer than the duration of childhood. The present report focuses on children, but at times analysis is extended to youth, defined by the General Assembly to be those aged 15 to 24. We should recognize the capacities and agency of children and youth, and avoid characterizing children and youth as vulnerable or as delinquents who pose a threat to security. Moreover, adults are responsible for environments of conflict and violence.

6. The findings and recommendations of this strategic review are presented within an outline that seeks to capture the multifaceted ways in which conflict affects children. Experience in the last decade demonstrates that our actions are

[1] A/51/306, para. 6.

[2] A five-year review was commissioned by Canada for an International Conference held in Winnipeg in 2000 (see A/55/749).

[3] Includes departments, offices, agencies, funds and programmes.

[4] A/51/306, para. 30.

ineffective when they focus too narrowly on one violation or one sector. The report approaches issues in a cross-cutting manner:

(a) Changing characteristics of armed conflict and consequences for children;

(b) Political engagement and the legal and normative framework;

(c) System-level developments, including guidelines, monitoring and reporting and funding;

(d) Comprehensive response, including basic services, programming concerns and prevention.

7. The Machel study galvanized significant action and progress for children in 10 years. Building on the foundation provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which details comprehensive rights for children at all times, highlights of progress in the last decade include a strengthened international legal framework and the first prosecutions of perpetrators by international tribunals.

8. Much more remains to be done. The roles and responsibilities of all Member States are essential in regard to this issue. Greater will and commitment are needed to accelerate accountability and operationalize legislation, policy and action at the national and field levels.

II. Changing characteristics of armed conflict and consequences for children

"We were scared working inside our homes; we were scared working outside our homes. We never knew what was going to happen."

— Nepali child[5]

9. The Machel study noted with concern how war tactics had changed, with civilians, including children, increasingly becoming targets of violence and atrocities. The last decade has featured growing recognition of the changes to the character of armed conflict. An emerging body of United Nations reports and research illustrates that changing characteristics of armed conflict have created new threats to children.

10. As stated by the Secretary-General "there is no universally applicable definition of 'armed conflict'".[6] Analysis of reports monitoring battle deaths shows that the number of conflicts for 2005 ranged from 17 to 56 worldwide.[7] The lower figure pertains to conflicts with more than 1,000 battle deaths and the higher derives from a threshold of 25 battle deaths, allowing for the inclusion of lower-intensity conflicts and those where the parties to the conflict do not include a State. The

[5] All children's quotes are taken from focus groups conducted for this review.

[6] A/59/695-S/2005/72, para. 7.

[7] *SIPRI Yearbook 2007*, Oxford University Press, June 2007; and the Human Security Centre's *Human Security Report 2005: War and Peace in the 21st Century*, New York, Oxford University Press.

Secretary-General's 2006 report on children and armed conflict[8] addressed 19 situations.

11. One-sided violence has become a feature of many of today's armed conflicts, with poorly resourced and lightly armed groups often preying on civilians. Yet as the Machel study reported, in addition to thousands of children being killed and wounded every year as a direct result of fighting, many more children in conflict contexts die from malnutrition and disease. The International Rescue Committee's mortality survey of conflict-affected provinces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, covering a three-year period, reported that 86 per cent of deaths were caused by indirect consequences of war, with children disproportionately affected.[9]

12. Another emerging understanding concerns "asset wars", where economic interests commercialize and prolong conflict. Misuse of natural resources, such as diamonds, or the scarcity of resources, such as water, can fuel conflict. Such conflicts often become self-perpetuating and protracted. The Secretary-General has noted, "the illicit exploitation of natural resources ... serve[s] to intensify the vulnerability of children in conflict situations, as well as in transitional and post-conflict situations".[10]

13. Many of today's conflicts involve non-State actors and shifting landscapes of transnational organized crime. Security vacuums feature an increase in paramilitary forces and the privatization of conflict. Situations of armed violence fall into grey areas as traditional definitions of armed conflict erode. Despite distinctions in legal frameworks, the experience for children is the same. The situation in Haiti clearly highlights how, in a conflict-affected State with extreme poverty and corruption, armed groups, many with links to political parties, can quickly move towards organized crime, including drug and arms trafficking. A child recruited by an armed group one day may be labelled a gang member the next as political realities evolve.

14. Over recent years, terrorism has come to define the security discourse. One of the most striking instances of terrorism aimed at children was the Beslan school hostage-taking in the northern Caucasus in 2004. Of great concern is the use of children in suicide attacks and the fact that such attacks are disproportionately against civilians, often perpetrated in places of worship, market squares and other public places. As recently affirmed by the General Assembly, "acts, methods and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations are activities aimed at the destruction of human rights".[11] Also of great concern are situations where children are subject to legal grey areas and counter-terrorism measures that violate international juvenile justice standards.

15. While significant progress has been made in the last decade on anti-personnel mines, resulting in a marked decrease in casualties, the proliferation and accessibility of small arms and other improvised munitions continue to endanger children. The widespread availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons can contribute to a sustained culture of violence and the "rule of the gun". A variety

[8] A/61/529-S/2006/826 and Corr.1.

[9] International Rescue Committee, *Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Results from a Nationwide Survey*, conducted September-November 2002, reported April 2003.

[10] A/59/695-S/2005/72, para. 148.

[11] Resolution 60/288, seventh preambular paragraph.

of explosive devices continue to kill and maim children in about 85 conflict and post-conflict countries.

16. While new features of conflict may have emerged, the impact on children remains as brutal as ever. This review found that an attempt to aggregate numbers would give inaccurate results, and instead describes specific issues and contexts illustrating the impact of conflict on children.

17. The frame of grave violations in situations of armed conflict proposed by the Secretary-General for priority attention in global monitoring and reporting provides a starting point for examining the impacts of conflict on children.[12]

18. The killing or maiming of children is defined as any action that results in death or permanent or disabling injury, scarring, disfigurement or mutilation. With increased blurring of the distinction between civilians and combatants, as described above, children bear a heavy toll of mortality. Often threats continue even after hostilities cease; hundreds of thousands of cluster bombs left in Lebanon in 2006 pose a particular risk to children, heavily contaminating school grounds and agricultural lands. Globally, more than a third of casualties from explosive remnants of war are children.

19. While at the normative level there has been significant progress in addressing the recruitment or use of child soldiers in the last decade, large numbers of boys and girls continue to serve as fighters, cooks, porters and messengers, and to be used for sexual purposes. Since 2002, the Secretary-General has listed parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict in 18 countries.[13] That estimate is at the lower end; in 2004 the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers identified 43 countries where either illegal recruitment or use was "indicated".[14]

20. Attacks against schools or hospitals, including the occupation, shelling or destruction of facilities, as well as harm to personnel, have risen dramatically in recent years. Such attacks not only directly harm the individuals involved but severely limit others' access to basic services. A recent study commissioned by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization provides sobering statistics on attacks against schools, teachers and students.[15] In Afghanistan, over 100 bombing, arson and missile attacks were made against educational facilities in the first half of 2006, and approximately 105,000 children were denied access to education because of insecurity.[16]

21. Widespread rape or other grave sexual violence continues to be committed in virtually every conflict situation and can take the form of sexual slavery, forced prostitution, sexual mutilation or other forms of brutality. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a climate of impunity has resulted in rampant sexual violence, with children representing an alarming 33 per cent of victims.[17] Gender-based violence often leads to severe and long-lasting health problems, including early pregnancies, fistula, infections, HIV/AIDS and psychological trauma. Rape

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[12] A/59/695-S/2005/72, para. 68.

[13] Countries are referred to only to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing the violations in question.

[14] *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*.

[15] ED/EFA/2007/ME/18.

[16] A/61/529-S/2006/826, para. 14.

[17] S/2007/391, para. 40.

victims and children born as a result of rape are often marginalized. In Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, children born of rape are at times referred to as "children of hate" and at times even "the enemy's children".

22. Abduction of children can be politically motivated or for purposes of recruitment, sexual exploitation or forced labour. The number of abductions in northern Uganda since the onset of conflict is estimated at 25,000.[18] Recent reports of the Secretary-General note abductions in Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, where some 22,000 students were abducted by Maoists between 2002 and 2006, Somalia, Sri Lanka and the Sudan.

23. The denial of humanitarian access for children, whether deliberate or the result of a deteriorating security situation, deprives children of assistance and violates their basic rights, including the right to life. In Chad, the Secretary-General reported that the theft of 118 humanitarian vehicles by armed persons in 2006 seriously deterred humanitarian efforts.[19]

24. A number of other conflict-related issues not listed among the six grave violations have a significant impact on children's lives. Illegal detention has been highlighted as a violation requiring greater attention. In April 2007 the Special Representative expressed concern about the detention of 400 Palestinian children held in Israeli prisons, often for minor offences, denied family visits and due process, and sometimes tried by military tribunals, in violation of juvenile justice standards.

25. Forced displacement uproots children and youths at a time when their lives most need stability. During flight and displacement, children can become separated from their families, further exposing them to exploitation and abuse. Analysis undertaken for this review found that in 2006, an estimated 18.1 million children were among populations living with the effects of displacement; within that group, there were an estimated 5.8 million refugee children and 8.8 million internally displaced children.[20]

26. During and after conflict, the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse increases dramatically. This is perhaps most strikingly visible in persistent allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of minors by peacekeepers. The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations has acknowledged the endemic nature and exploitative dimensions of the problem, pointing out that some allegations involved girls as young as 13 years of age receiving food in exchange for sexual services.

27. Children have increasingly been pulled into hazardous work, as parties to conflict seek new sources of revenue to sustain military campaigns. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the United Nations Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of that country determined that the war was mainly about access to, control of and trade in

[18] S/2007/260, para. 10.

[19] S/2007/400, para. 47.

[20] Figures here result from an assessment of a combination of data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, the United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council.

key mineral resources,[21] children are commonly found working in mines and used in trafficking or as security guards.

28. Whether as a cause or as a consequence, conflict is a significant obstacle to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals:

(a) Of the 20 countries with the highest under-five mortality rate, 15 are currently experiencing complex emergencies in at least a part of the country;

(b) At least 50 per cent of out-of-school children of primary-school age are living in conflict-affected countries.[22]

29. The disintegration of basic social services that accompanies conflict further weakens coping mechanisms. For instance, in Sierra Leone more than 60 per cent of rural health-care units were non-functional in the immediate aftermath of war. In Southern Sudan, inadequate attention to the nutrition status of adolescents at one point contributed to mortality rates above 20 per 10,000 people per day.[23] For education in northern Uganda, classes of 200 or more are common; students sit in cramped conditions, with few books, listening to a teacher who has little professional training. In contexts such as Chad, Darfur and Iraq, reduced access to and availability of safe water and sanitation have increased endemic diarrhoea and affected school attendance, especially of girls.

30. Social protection systems are overstretched such that children who are orphaned, disabled or vulnerable in other ways may need special attention. Children and young people are not a homogeneous group. Young children are more vulnerable to visible health risks, adolescent girls may be targeted for sexual violence and boys may be singled out for recruitment. Conflicts and their aftermath can last the length of childhood and adolescence, compounding physical, social, emotional and cognitive risks.

31. In a globalized world, local and regional destabilization has global repercussions. Not only is responding to conflict a moral obligation; protection is in the direct security interests of all States.

III. Political engagement and the legal and normative framework

"People see violence, they grow up with it, and they know it. They repeat it .... And there is nothing to stop violence, there is impunity." — Haitian boy

32. The Machel study launched global mobilization that yielded gains in the international political and legal spheres. However, widespread violations occur daily against children, demanding further concerted action and engagement. The General Assembly is uniquely placed to deepen its engagement by systematically addressing all violations against children and the full breadth of impacts faced by children in conflict situations.

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[21] S/2003/1027.

[22] Save the Children, "Last in line, last in school: how donors are failing children in conflict-affected fragile states", 2007.

[23] Salama, P., Spiegel, P., Talley, L. and Waldman, R., "Lessons learned from complex emergencies over the past decade", *Lancet* 2004; 364: 1801-13.

33. Important intergovernmental action includes the Millennium Development Goals, all of which have an impact — and six of eight have a specific focus — on children. In 2002, at its special session on children, the General Assembly adopted the final document of the session, entitled "A world fit for children",[24] whose four goal areas strongly reinforce the Millennium Development Goals. Conflict-affected countries frequently show limited progress towards the goals and indicators of the Millennium Development Goals and the "World fit for children" commitments, and sometimes they even regress. Rather than concluding that those goals are too ambitious, efforts towards their achievement should be accelerated.

34. Security Council resolution 1261 (1999) affirmed the protection of children as a peace and security concerned initiated the progressive consideration of children in armed conflict by the Council. Reports of the Secretary-General to the Council on children and armed conflict have since provided an essential base for situation-specific actions required of Member States and other stakeholders.

35. An innovation in addressing the conduct of parties to conflict followed the adoption of resolution 1379 (2001), in which the Security Council recommended that the Secretary-General list parties recruiting and using children in armed conflict. In its resolution 1460 (2003) the Council called on parties to prepare and implement concrete, time-bound action plans for the cessation of all violations against children. Action plans provide a mechanism to engage parties in practical steps to fulfil their obligations in regard to children. Although the Council expressed its intention to take targeted measures against perpetrators on the lists, action in this regard remains a pressing challenge.

36. Another milestone was the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), in which the Security Council established a monitoring and reporting mechanism and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. By August 2007 that Working Group had considered 10 country reports, making specific recommendations for each context and taking such actions as public statements to parties by the Chairman. Resolution 1612 (2005) is resulting in progressive action by some countries, including Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Uganda, to establish mechanisms, whether or not they are on the Council's agenda.

37. The continued success of the Working Group will depend on the potency of its recommendations. All States should ensure timely follow-up to the recommendations and conclusions of the Working Group. Further, whereas focus has been on the recruitment and use of child soldiers, all grave violations against children require comparable attention.

38. The Machel study urged regional and subregional bodies to formulate action plans to protect children. Though some progress has been achieved, the engagement of regional bodies remains inconsistent. The establishment of the child protection unit within the Economic Community of West African States in 2002 was a promising initiative, but the unit ceased to exist in November 2006. The European Union's guidelines and implementation strategy on children and armed conflict, which include ways of contributing to the mechanism established by the Security Council in its resolution 1612 (2005) are an important milestone with great potential. Regional bodies should define policies on children affected by armed

[24] Resolution S-27/2, annex.

conflict and promote compliance with international standards through, inter alia, peer review mechanisms.

39. The last 10 years have witnessed increased inclusion of children in a wide range of negotiations, agreements and peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. Children's concerns have also been more consistently included in peace agendas and treaties. Clauses on children in peace agreements should be specific and their goals achievable.

40. Challenges remain for enforcing compliance. For example, while in the Sudan the Comprehensive Peace Agreement included a specific benchmark to demobilize all child soldiers within six months of the signature of the Agreement, only an estimated 1,000 children had been released one year later, despite estimates of "the significant presence" of children within the armed forces and other armed groups.[25] Robust monitoring mechanisms should be established and continuous dialogue maintained with all parties to ensure compliance with their commitments.

Legal and normative framework, instruments and standards

41. Significant advances have been made since the Machel study in both the development of the international legal and normative framework and the adoption of instruments at the national level.

42. Progress has been especially significant on the issue of the recruitment and use of children. While the recruitment of children under 15 and their direct participation in hostilities were prohibited by the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, adopted in 2000, detailed the standards against the use of children in armed conflict and raised the minimum age of participation to 18 years. International Labour Organization Convention No. 182, defining child soldiering as among the worst forms of child labour, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child are other examples of progress.

43. The international community mobilized to combat the threat of anti-personnel landmines with significant success, adopting the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. In addition to 154 ratifiers and 2 signatories, 34 non-State armed groups have committed to its objectives. The 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol provide guidance to States on how best to assist victims of mines and explosive remnants of war, among others. The process initiated by the Oslo Declaration to create a legally binding instrument to prohibit cluster munitions by the end of 2008 deserves support.

44. The prosecution of crimes against children has advanced significantly. In 1998 the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court established a vital tool to address impunity by codifying grave violations against children. The Court has charged Ugandan and Congolese commanders with recruiting and using children in hostilities.

[25] S/2006/662, para. 50.

45. Special tribunals have set important precedents in holding perpetrators accountable. The ruling by the Special Court for Sierra Leone that the recruitment or use of children under 15 in hostilities is a war crime under customary international law and its recent conviction of military commanders for recruiting children are notable achievements. The International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda set vital precedents by prosecuting sexual violence and rape as crimes against humanity and instruments of genocide.

46. Some national legal systems have also taken steps to hold perpetrators accountable. In March 2007, a local tribunal in the Democratic Republic of the Congo prosecuted and sentenced a military commander for the recruitment and use of children.

47. Vital progress on child participation in justice processes has been made. The International Criminal Court precluded the prosecution of children and adopted child-friendly procedures and protective measures on the participation of children as witnesses. Children are also playing important roles in national transitional justice processes. The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided a model for ensuring children's participation throughout its process, which included the protection of a child-friendly version of the final report.

48. International juvenile justice standards for the treatment of child offenders are now more commonly endorsed by States. However, their application in conflict situations has been limited, often resulting in prolonged and arbitrary detention, illegal arrest and torture. States should uphold juvenile justice standards at all times — with regard to access to legal assistance, protection and separation from adults — resorting to detention only as a last resort.

49. Despite the broad and rapid acceptance of international legal standards for the protection of children in armed conflict, a significant gap remains between the standards and their implementation. With specific regard to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, the enactment of national legislation is lagging. The work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in reviewing country reports and delineating implementation actions at the national level is important in bridging this gap. Though States are obliged to report on implementation, many country reports are overdue. States should meet reporting obligations to the Committee and ensure timely and sustained follow-up at the national level of the Committee's recommendations.

50. Implementation may also be undermined in some cases by operational challenges. Child victims encounter obstacles to justice, such as lack of witness protection, assistance and legal aid. The ratification of international instruments must be accompanied by comprehensive reform, including the revision of relevant national laws, the establishment of child-friendly procedures and the training of all actors.

51. Another area for national legislation concerns the need for labour and disclosure provisions that address private sector actors whose activities in conflict situations may relate to the exploitation of children.

52. Related to the need for specific actions to control the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as called for in Security Council resolutions 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), an international arms trade treaty establishing common

international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms could help reduce the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and its adverse impact on children.

53. The troubling dichotomy between the advances in norms at the international level and the prevalence of serious violations of children's rights on the ground points to the continuing need to translate political engagement and legal norms into tangible gains for children.

IV. System-level developments

"We have no future. No one guarantees anything for us. The decision makers institutions do not hear about our hardships. This room is the only one that hears us." — Kosovar child

54. The past decade has featured significant system-wide developments related to children affected by armed conflict. New intergovernmental and inter-agency policies, guidelines, mainstreaming and coordination efforts have begun to improve response by States, the United Nations and other actors. Yet greater investment and coherence are needed, particularly on monitoring, reporting and capacity, and the participation of children remains insufficiently supported.

55. Policies and guidelines adopted in the last decade form essential complements to progress on international legal norms. Important intergovernmental guidance related to conflict-affected children includes the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998), the United Nations Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (2005) and the Paris Commitments (2007).

56. Where the Machel study found troubling denial regarding sexual exploitation and abuse, the Secretary-General's bulletin "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse"[26] has institutionalized consistent disciplinary measures for United Nations peacekeepers and staff members, and influenced a number of other actors to create their own codes of conduct.

57. The Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (2006) and Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (2007) represent major progress and now require effective implementation. As part of this, child disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, rights training and justice concerns need to be systematically incorporated into emerging work on security system reform.

58. Other inter-agency standards and guidelines reflect an increased emphasis on humanitarian accountability and provide frameworks for improving the quality and effectiveness of responses:

(a) Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (2000), with revisions including child-focused indicators and guidance (2004);

(b) Operational Guidance on Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies (2001);

[26] ST/SGB/2003/13.

(c) Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (2004);

(d) Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction (2004);

(e) United Nations inter-agency policy on mine action and effective coordination (2005);

(f) The Inter-Agency Standing Committee's guidelines for HIV/AIDS interventions in emergency settings (2004), gender-based violence interventions in emergency settings (2005) and mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings (2007).

59. Instruments have also emerged to regulate corporate entities, including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Principles, the United Nations Human Rights Norms for Business and a host of industry association principles, such as those of the Global Compact. With active engagement, the private sector can further these initiatives to effect real change for children.

60. Just as the challenge in regard to progress in the international legal framework is implementation, the application of these policies and guidelines requires political commitment, wider dissemination, adaptation to local contexts and adequate resources.

United Nations mainstreaming and coordination

61. The role of UNICEF, as the lead agency for children, and that of the Special Representative are fundamental to United Nations work on children and armed conflict. The Office of the Special Representative, since its establishment following the Machel study, has filled a critical role within the United Nations system. The Office engages in high-level advocacy, including through field missions to specific situations of concern, reports to the General Assembly, prepares the annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on children and armed conflict and is a key player, with UNICEF and United Nations country teams, in the monitoring and reporting mechanism established under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

62. The Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, led by the Special Representative, brings together other relevant United Nations entities. While the Task Force has traditionally focused on preparing annual reports to the Security Council, more effort is needed to address specific reporting work and strategic discussion on children and armed conflict issues.

63. Improvements have been made in mainstreaming children's concerns into United Nations decision-making: such concerns are regularly considered by the Executive Committees and have featured in its discussions on the responsibility to protect and on rule of law. Other intergovernmental and inter-agency forums, including the Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund and the United Nations interdepartmental Framework Team on Early Warning and Prevention, should also include children's issues on their agendas.

64. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNICEF and the Special Representative have worked together since 1999 to ensure that peacekeeping

operations incorporate children's issues and include child protection advisers. This has expanded capacity to gather information on violations against children and led to the inclusion of child protection in induction training for peacekeepers. Effective partnerships should be developed among the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other relevant actors at both the headquarters and the field level; and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations needs further child protection expertise at headquarters.

65. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) deploys child-specialized staff in the early phase of response, and now requires annual participatory assessments as part of its age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy. The United Nations Development Programme has a new emphasis on youth and conflict, and UNFPA a focus on reproductive health and HIV programming for youth. These efforts should be extended and reinforced.

66. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee's humanitarian reform efforts are aimed at ensuring greater coordination, predictability and accountability in emergency response. Humanitarian coordinators consulted for this strategic review described increased "ownership" of children's concerns by United Nations field leadership and humanitarian actors. Children's concerns in emergencies have been increasingly recognized, with specific working groups in the areas of protection and health and an education cluster being established.

Cooperation with civil society actors

67. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can play a critical role in advocacy for and support of children affected by armed conflict. Following the Machel study, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers was formed in 1998 and was instrumental in working towards the adoption of the Optional Protocol. The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, established in 2000, has achieved a set of minimum standards on education that elaborate on recommendations of the Machel study.

68. With growing corporate interest in social responsibility, the role of the private sector is emerging in different ways. When United Nations investigations in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo exposed the complicity of some international corporations, reputable corporate actors began to regulate trade flows and support human rights standards. A good example is the Peace Diamond Alliance in Sierra Leone, which has brought two major diamond buyers together with the Government, NGOs and donors to govern production, monitor violence and ban the use of child labour. Expanding public/private alliances have potential for addressing war's impact on children.

69. While the media sometimes have a negative impact through violent images or biased messaging, they have great potential for positive influence, including by providing children and youth the opportunity to express their own ideas and opinions. Despite the unstable situation in regions in Somalia, radio penetration is strong; in fact, one of the focus groups for this review was conducted there through a radio show led by young people.

Participation of children and youth

70. Participation is guaranteed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 12. While opportunities for conflict-affected children and youth to participate in activities are expanding, their participation in decision-making remains limited. In work for this review in northern Uganda, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children found diverse understandings of participation, with most humanitarian actors highlighting theatre or sports activities rather than decision-making roles.

71. One common form of participation is the establishment of organized clubs and groups. In the Gulu region of northern Uganda, more than 200 registered youth groups are providing social services and support to communities, including HIV/AIDS-awareness and income-generating activities, despite inconsistent financial support.

72. Where children have access to information, are members of organizations and are involved in decisions that affect them, they are better able to protect themselves, survive and develop. Both conflict and post-conflict situations are often characterized by intense politicization; more serious effort should be made to understand the motivations of young people and respond with a view to enabling participation and change in non-violent ways.

Monitoring, reporting and analysis

73. As noted, the monitoring and reporting mechanism set up pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) is a milestone in terms of meeting the information needs for Security Council action. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in cooperation with UNICEF, should continue to play a coordinating role at this level. However, capacity at the operational level remains inadequate and requires greater financial and human resources for United Nations entities and other key actors. Further efforts are needed to draw from the various reporting systems of peacekeeping missions, OHCHR, UNHCR, UNICEF and others, including civil society organizations. Moreover, it is important to ensure that the monitoring and reporting mechanism is more effective in informing programmatic responses.

74. Beyond the resolution 1612 (2005) mechanism, there is a need to strengthen information analysis on children across diverse monitoring and reporting systems in conflict-affected countries. Data collection tends to be weak and insufficiently disaggregated by geographic region, age and gender. National surveillance systems for health, education and social services are fundamental components of information systems and should be strengthened to support analysis. The UNICEF multiple indicator cluster survey, undertaken at three-year intervals, provides rich statistical data on the situation of children and could be customized for conflict-affected countries.

75. A common framework and inclusive system are needed to better capture the range of qualitative data available from those systems, in addition to the more common incident-based documentation. Inter-agency leadership is especially needed from UNICEF and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to map existing efforts and systems, clarify the objective of data collection, design a global

monitoring framework, standardize definitions and indicators and build a common information management system.

76. Research also needs to be more systematically aligned with field needs and identify promising models. While research efforts and academic partnerships on some issues have been growing, results are insufficiently rigorous and comparative and typically fail to measure long-term impact.

Capacity and financing

77. Capacity-building projects to enhance the care and protection of children affected by armed conflict have improved in the past decade. One example is Action for the Rights of the Child, an inter-agency training initiative used worldwide with a range of local stakeholders, including police and military, government officials and children. At all levels gaps remain; there must be more systematic efforts at the global and country levels for improved surge capacity, gap analysis, creation of professional tools and training.

78. Since the Machel study, new financing mechanisms have been established, including the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, the Central Emergency Response Fund grant facility and common humanitarian funds. Despite improvements, reporting is rarely disaggregated, making it difficult to discern the extent to which funding patterns match children's needs. Short-term relief alone is not an appropriate or effective response to conflict; humanitarian support continues to be disbursed for time frames as short as three to six months and should more consistently ensure the sustained programming children need.

79. Research for the present review studied a series of consolidated appeals (2003-2006) for 11 countries affected by armed conflict. In most of the common humanitarian action plans, children were included as part of "vulnerable groups", deflecting attention from child-specific priorities. Funding for specific child protection activities averaged 22 per cent of total protection contributions for those appeals, ranging from 4 per cent in Somalia to 46 per cent in Liberia. Recent analysis by the International Save the Children Alliance showed that conflict-affected fragile States received less than a fifth of total education aid from 2003 to 2005, though they had about half of the world's out-of-school children. The gaps in resources for children affected by conflict are so extreme that it is clear that a quantum leap in funding is needed.

V. Towards a comprehensive response

"NGOs and the United Nations have been working in our areas, supporting us. They are all leaving now, and this is making everything worse."
— Sri Lankan child

80. States have the primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights. In partnership with United Nations agencies, NGOs and civil society, States should:

(a) Provide access to a full range of quality basic services;

(b) Develop protection systems and supports;

(c) Address special concerns, such as community-based reintegration, gender-based violence, transitional justice and peacebuilding.

81. Health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation, and shelter are among the daily needs of every child. Recent years have seen gains in the blending of humanitarian and development principles across these sectors. Basic service interventions require support for, and alignment with, existing government or civil society systems, even when non-State providers are involved.

82. In conflict, a common challenge to service delivery is the need to scale up across large and often insecure geographical areas. Infrastructure is needed, as well as support for recurrent costs and training for teachers, health workers, nutritionists and others. Challenges along these lines are compounded by donor reluctance to invest while conflict continues. The provision of basic services for children should not be treated as a peace dividend — children's physical and psychological development cannot be postponed.

83. Where appropriate, and without shirking obligations to uphold international humanitarian law, advocacy and special arrangements by parties to conflict to ensure children's access to services should be encouraged. "Days of tranquillity" and enforced ceasefire periods in Afghanistan, Nepal, the Sudan and Uganda show how negotiation with parties can facilitate health campaigns. In Nepal, disruption of education was successfully stemmed in some locations through a country-wide campaign for "children as zones of peace".

84. Affordable basic services are critical to ensuring access, including for the poorest and most vulnerable. The abolition of school fees has brought large enrolment increases in several countries, including those emerging from conflict; nevertheless, support is needed for poor families to meet costs for such things as schoolbooks and suitable clothing. Likewise, the removal of user fees for health care should be advocated if they pose a barrier to children's access, but clear plans and monitoring should ensure that informal charges are not demanded of users to replace revenue previously generated by fees.

85. Health and nutrition go hand in hand in emergency response: neither is fully effective in reducing morbidity and mortality without the other. A limited set of proven interventions can drastically reduce child mortality, with integrated approaches being increasingly practiced, including the distribution of vitamin A or deworming medication during measles or polio immunization campaigns. Community-based approaches are also growing in importance; for instance, severely malnourished children are increasingly treated at home with ready-to-use-therapeutic foods, with experience in Darfur and Chad resulting in higher recovery rates and reduced costs. While reproductive health has become more integrated into humanitarian response, adolescents should be reached more consistently.

86. The Machel study identified major gaps in the provision of education in conflict-affected countries, highlighting the need for continuity all the way up the "ladder of education", from early childhood education to tertiary education. More focus on this is needed, particularly for secondary education. In the last decade, the prioritization of education for children affected by conflict has been reinforced, particularly as its importance as a protective mechanism has become better understood. Education content and disparities, however, can fuel conflict; greater attention should be given to promoting social cohesion through quality and equity.

Consultations with young people continue to confirm education as one of their top priorities.

87. Water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as shelter, are important in their own right. Their absence has obvious negative impacts on health, nutrition and education goals. The focus on hygiene education in recent years has been an entry point for community engagement, including that of children.

Strengthening protection systems and support

88. As conflict erodes protection systems, children need support to ensure that their rights are safeguarded. National child protection systems and community-based networks, coupled with oversight and monitoring, play a crucial role in understanding risks to children, and in both preventing and responding to violations. Child welfare committees in Liberia and elsewhere have been useful models.

89. A major issue addressed in the Machel study was the tracing and reunification of unaccompanied minors and separated children. Significant progress has been made in this area, including strong coordination among actors, culminating in the Inter-Agency Guiding Principles. Prevention of and response to the separation of children remain priority activities in all stages of a crisis.

90. Consensus on good practice for children's mental health and psychosocial well-being has been a point of progress since the Machel study. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines in this area indicate an age-appropriate, multisectoral approach. Strengthening of social support systems, provision of opportunities for play and development and clinical services for specific problems all constitute aspects of programming in this area. Sport, music and drama activities have been shown to play an important role in providing children with a sense of normalcy and routine.

91. Emerging over the last decade, safe spaces for children — sometimes labelled child-friendly spaces or safe play areas — provide children with a secure place to play or learn. Early childhood development activities in such spaces have produced positive results for young children and their caregivers, such as in camps for the displaced in Afghanistan, Chad and Liberia. Safe spaces have a wide diversity of approaches and need clearer standards.

92. HIV prevention and care, including antiretroviral treatment, have begun to better address the needs of conflict-affected populations. Educational systems should play a central role in HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention and care during emergencies, including expanded life-skills curricula that teach about nutrition, hygiene and other survival skills. Despite limited delivery, overly complicated protocols and fear of stigma, multisectoral responses have shown their potential for conflict settings.

Addressing special concerns

93. During the preparations for this strategic review, a number of cross-cutting issues were identified: community-based reintegration and youth opportunities; gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse; and justice processes and reconciliation. Although agreement on approaches is emerging, implementation is lagging and underresourced and often faces challenges because of the inertia imposed by some community customs, traditions and history.

94. Reintegration is commonly thought of as the final component of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, but in reality encompasses much more, and for children, it requires programming outside of formal disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. The process has wide-ranging aims, different for each boy and girl involved, including building emotional trust and reconciling with family and community, providing access to education and developing a means of livelihood. As captured in the Paris Principles, to be effective and contribute to the prevention of re-recruitment, reintegration needs to be comprehensive and long-term. A community-based approach, in which families and communities are central to defining and providing support, affords the best chances of success.

95. Too often, reintegration efforts inappropriately single out children who in the past were recruited, thereby perpetuating stigma. Likewise, cash benefits for returning children can be seen as rewarding their involvement in violence. To the extent possible, reintegration efforts should benefit all affected children, rather than select groups. A useful approach in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone has involved the provision of materials to schools accepting demobilized children, thus benefiting all students.

96. Girls often suffer stigmatization whether formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups, or as victims of sexual violence. Response should prevent further harm and provide confidential access to reintegration supports. Addressing a range of long-term needs entails health care, including reproductive health, fistula treatment and provision of post-exposure prophylaxis; legal support; and psychosocial care. Centres that provide comprehensive health, legal and psychosocial support and care to victims and their families in safety and confidentiality have been shown to be effective. Sustainable livelihood opportunities for young girls are a priority, to limit the risk of sexual exploitation and violence.

97. Local approaches to justice and reconciliation are increasingly playing a role in transitional justice strategies, building upon traditional norms to strengthen the protection of children in communities. In research conducted in Sierra Leone for this review, local actors cited the most positive reconciliation experiences as those that included traditional approaches. Children compelled to commit atrocities during the conflict reported that they had gained acceptance in their communities through dialogue based on traditional healing mechanisms. The feasibility of involving children in traditional approaches to justice and enhancing their role in community reconciliation requires further attention.

98. While reintegration supports should be multisectoral, special emphasis on education and livelihood support is needed, appropriate to the age and the individual. While the most effective way to assist children and youths who have not completed education is to enable them to enter or re-enter schools, alternatives are also necessary. Accelerated courses of primary education, such as those in Afghanistan, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Southern Sudan, can play an important role. Girl mothers require special attention to have access to education and livelihood support, in such forms as day care for their children.

99. The subject of reintegration brings with it the question of what young people are returning to, which is usually an impoverished, subsistence-based environment. Most vocational training programmes result in more young hairdressers, tailors or carpenters than the market can absorb, yet research has found significant positive outcomes in terms of new identities and self-esteem. Increased support for child and

youth livelihoods is essential; however, broader economic recovery and investment allowing small businesses to survive is equally vital. The education and livelihood aspects of reintegration programming require greater investment and identification of effective models.

Prevention and peacebuilding

100. One of the most effective ways of protecting children's rights is to prevent conflict and promote peace and reconciliation. Efforts should include integrating and mainstreaming children's issues in all conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes. This entails systematic participation of children, prioritizing children's concerns and including specific language on children's rights in peace processes and accords. In Indonesia, the Maluku Children's Parliament bridged the Muslim-Christian divide, serving as a model for adult peace negotiators.

101. Conflict prevention efforts should be child-sensitive, with emergency plans and early warning systems integrating children's concerns in their strategies and indicators. The "disaster risk reduction begins at school" campaign conducted by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction is one such example. Emergency preparedness for service sectors is important, so that despite repeated shocks, they can continue meeting the needs of children and youth.

VI. Looking ahead: a platform of recommendations

102. **The most effective way of protecting children's rights is to prevent conflict and promote peace. To that end, the present review proposes a platform of recommendations, and encourages that their implementation be reviewed within five years.**

A. Achieving universal implementation of international norms and ending impunity

Recommendation 1

103. **Achieve universal adherence to international standards and norms:**

(a) **Member States must uphold existing international standards and operationalize those obligations through accelerated national legislative reform and systematic implementation and monitoring;**

(b) **Member States and the United Nations system should keep under review the need for further legal instruments and mechanisms for compliance;**

(c) **All Member States and other stakeholders should endorse relevant guidelines that enhance the protection of children, and ensure their systematic implementation.**

Recommendation 2

104. **End impunity for violations against children:**

(a) **Member States must ensure systematic and timely investigation and prosecution of crimes against children in the context of armed conflict, and provide assistance to victims;**

(b) **Member States should apply targeted measures, including sanctions where appropriate, against individuals and parties to conflict and other entities, including the private sector, within their jurisdiction that persistently commit or are complicit in the commission of grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict;**

(c) **For the purpose of child protection, the United Nations should, where appropriate, undertake dialogue with parties to conflict, including non-State actors, and develop systems to hold non-State actors accountable.**

Recommendation 3

105. **Prioritize children's security:**

(a) **In all security-related matters, parties to conflict should recall that child rights are non-derogable and should ensure that children are protected from death, injury, harm, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;**

(b) **All parties to conflict must ensure safe and unhindered access and delivery of humanitarian assistance to all children, in collaboration with humanitarian agencies;**

(c) **Member States should fulfil commitments undertaken under the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons at the national, regional and global levels. They should implement existing legal instruments that address landmines and explosive remnants of war and develop a legally binding instrument on cluster munitions.**

Recommendation 4

106. **Strengthen monitoring and reporting:**

(a) **Member States, United Nations entities and NGOs must establish an inclusive system with a common framework, including agreed indicators and provisions for the disaggregation of data, for the timely collection, verification, analysis and reporting of information on all impacts on children and violations of their rights, and increase human and financial resources in this regard;**

(b) **Regarding Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), the capacities of the United Nations entities charged with implementation of the mechanism should be enhanced as appropriate, at both the field and the headquarters level.**

Recommendation 5

107. **Promote justice for children:**

(a) **Member States should uphold international standards, norms and guidelines on juvenile justice and ensure that their national legislation and systems treat all juveniles in a manner that takes into account their particular vulnerability, including ensuring access to legal assistance, focusing on rehabilitation, reintegration and diversion, recourse to detention only as a last resort and separation of juveniles from adults;**

(b) **Member States should promote the rule of law by ensuring children's access to justice, identifying and addressing obstacles encountered by children within their legal systems;**

(c) **Member States should establish child-friendly mechanisms to promote the participation and protection of children in all justice systems, including transitional justice processes.**

B. Caring for and protecting children in armed conflict

Recommendation 6

108. **Ensure access to basic services:**

(a) **Member States must ensure the continuity of an integrated package of basic services including education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, psychosocial support and social services; the availability of these services should be ensured and all barriers to access removed, including costs;**

(b) **United Nations entities, NGOs and donors should ensure that support for basic services is aligned with government systems, including when delivered by non-State providers, and is sustained through all phases of a conflict.**

Recommendation 7

109. **Support inclusive reintegration strategies:**

(a) **Stakeholders should ensure that release and reintegration strategies and activities are in line with the Paris Commitments and Principles and Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards; among other things, they should be inclusive of all conflict-affected girls and boys;**

(b) **Such strategies should ensure long-term sustainability and community-based approaches, with emphasis on education and livelihood support, including youth-oriented employment strategies and market analyses; particular attention should be given to girls, including ensuring confidential access to reintegration support to mitigate stigmatization.**

Recommendation 8

110. **End gender-based violence:**

(a) **Member States should give priority to protecting children from gender-based violence by adopting appropriate national legislation and ensuring systematic and timely investigation and prosecution of such crimes, in accordance with the wishes of survivors;**

(b) **All stakeholders must give particular attention to the specific needs of child survivors, as distinct from those of women, ensuring that adequate resources are invested in community-awareness campaigns and education initiatives that target boys and men;**

(c) **In addition to targeting perpetrator behaviour, as part of the strategy to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, all stakeholders should prioritize livelihood support measures that focus on women and girls;**

(d) **Member States, especially troop-contributing countries, and the United Nations system should enhance current efforts and ensure that rigorous systems are in place to promptly investigate and address allegations of abuse, including systematic training, specialized investigation capacity, stronger sanctions against perpetrators, mechanisms for referral to child protection actors and the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive, child-friendly policy on assistance and support for victims.**

C. Strengthening capacity, knowledge and partnership

Recommendation 9

111. **Improve capacity and knowledge for quality care and protection of children:**

To address insufficiencies in the base of expertise and programme learning, Member States and other stakeholders should invest more in building, strengthening and expanding international and national capacities, across all sectors, knowledge acquisition and management. Research should be more aligned with field needs and be documented, disseminated and applied.

Recommendation 10

112. **Ensure complementarity among key actors and mainstream children and armed conflict concerns:**

(a) **All stakeholders, including United Nations entities, donors and NGOs, must continue to improve complementarity and cooperation across intersecting mandates. Benchmarks should be established to improve the mainstreaming of children and armed conflict concerns in the policies, priorities and programmes of United Nations entities and institutional processes;**

(b) **The work of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has demonstrated a continuous need for a high-level Special Representative to advocate for children and armed conflict. This role should strengthen that of Member States**

themselves, complementing United Nations-system partners such as UNICEF, peacekeeping and political missions, field leadership and other child protection actors.

Recommendation 11

113. **Operationalize the engagement of regional bodies:**

(a) **Regional and intergovernmental bodies must more proactively address children and armed conflict concerns, including through the establishment of a high-level mechanism for advocacy, the development of action plans to implement declarations and capacity-building of child rights expertise in their secretariats;**

(b) **Regional intergovernmental bodies should ensure that children and armed conflict considerations are built into their peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, with the support of the United Nations where necessary.**

Recommendation 12

114. **Ensure that funding matches children's needs and priorities:**

(a) **Donors should individually and collectively ensure early, multi-year, flexible and thematic funding as called for by, inter alia, the principles of good humanitarian donorship. Donors should prioritize child-focused programming, taking into account the need for a long-term approach;**

(b) **In appeals for conflict-related emergencies and post-conflict reconstruction, the United Nations system, Governments and NGOs should clearly articulate child-focused objectives and disaggregated needs.**

D. Preventing conflict and building peace

Recommendation 13

115. **Consolidate the role of United Nations peacekeeping in child protection:**

(a) **The Security Council should continue to include child protection provisions in the mandates of peacekeeping operations;**

(b) **The Secretary-General should ensure that the need for and roles of child protection advisers are assessed during the preparation of peacekeeping mandates, ensuring effective partnerships with other key actors having protection mandates.**

Recommendation 14

116. **Increase the participation of and support for children and youth:**

(a) **Member States should make a greater commitment to address obstacles to the participation of young people in decision-making, and to actively promote their engagement in national and local-level governance, peace processes and justice, truth and reconciliation processes;**

(b) Increased technical and financial investment should include focused support for youth organizations, centres and activities, secondary and tertiary education, livelihood schemes and leadership opportunities.

Recommendation 15

117. **Integrate children's rights in peacemaking, peacebuilding and preventive actions:**

(a) All peacemaking and peacebuilding processes should be child-sensitive, including through specific provisions in peace agreements, the participation of children in those processes and the prioritization of resources;

(b) Member States, United Nations entities and regional intergovernmental bodies are urged to elaborate preventive approaches including, inter alia, early warning systems and community conflict resolution and reconciliation;

(c) Private sector entities must be cognizant of the impact that their activities and investments have on children in countries affected by conflict and take measures, including by regulating trade and joining corporate responsibility initiatives.